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SINGLE YOUNG PEOPLE ON WELFARE:

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

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THE
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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

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Those who wish a detailed understanding of any of the findings are strongly encouraged to read the relevant portions of the main report. It is written in a quite non-technical style and provides a great deal of detail that cannot be covered here. Readers who wish to know more about the methods of the study, or the aims of the study, or to get a feel for the type of people we talked to through illustrative cases should see Chapter 1, Chapter 2 or Chapter 3. (Since these chapters cannot be readily summarized, only Chapters 4 to 7 will be covered on the following pages.)

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The study deals with single people, between 16 and 25 years of age, who were receiving welfare from the City of Hamilton* in early 1972. Our interest was focussed on four major topics:

- 1) their backgrounds and views of life;
- 2) their job seeking efforts;
- 3) their success or failure in finding work;
- 4) changes in their job seeking methods or their views of life over the period of the study.

We gathered our data through interviews in the first four months of 1972. We talked to ninety people who came on welfare in January, 1972, and who, when they applied, had no immediate prospects for getting off.** We also spoke with one hundred twenty-two who, on January 31, had been on the rolls for three months or more. No one going to school was contacted, since people in school would not (at least, ordinarily) be interested in full time work.

Where possible, a second interview was held five to eight weeks after the first, to ask about changes that might have taken place and to gather further data. Two-thirds of our respondents were contacted a second time.

REASONS FOR A STUDY

The study was done for three reasons.

* More precisely, they were receiving assistance for shelter and general living expenses under the General Welfare Assistance Act.

**People with an immediate prospect for getting off would include those who, for example, were just passing through town, or who were waiting for their first Unemployment Insurance cheques to arrive. People in these and similar situations were not interviewed.

First, the Board of the Social Planning and Research Council wanted to do whatever it could about unemployment. One possibility was to study the effects of unemployment or the work potential of the unemployed; hopefully, the findings would have a bearing on public policy.

Second, little Canadian research had been done on welfare recipients. Even such basic questions as their social backgrounds had scarcely been touched on. No studies, to our knowledge, had been focussed on why some recipients find jobs while others do not.* Yet this question needed to be answered; the answers might suggest ways of changing our welfare programs to get people into productive work faster.

Third, the growing numbers of young people on welfare had aroused a good deal of public discussion. The Government of Ontario had set up a Task Force to look into the situation of single, employable people on welfare. Many of these people, of course, were in the age group we were concerned with.** The level of public and governmental interest suggested that a well-done study of this group was likely to be given close attention.

CHAPTER 4 - BACKGROUNDS, WAYS OF LIVING AND VIEWS OF LIFE

Chapter 4 contains four sections:

- 1) Personal Background
- 2) The Current Situation
- 3) Ideas About the Future
- 4) Looking for Work

Each will be summarized briefly.

* Except in the context of demonstration projects designed to find out whether a particular program resulted in more people finding work.

**The report was presented to the Minister of Community and Social Services in February, 1972, under the title, Report of the Task Force on Employment Opportunities for Welfare Recipients.

Personal Background

Over half of the people who had come on welfare in January of 1972, and over two-thirds of those who had been on for three months or longer, had grown up in Hamilton-Wentworth. Of those who had come here on their own, that is, without their families, about half said the reason they had come was to look for work.

Two-thirds of those in each sample had not completed high school. Only five per cent had any post secondary training. This compares with more than twenty per cent among people under twenty-five in the out-of-school population in the Census Metropolitan Area in 1971. More than two-thirds of our sample said they had been given little or no encouragement by their parents to go farther in school. About half said the reason they had left was that they were bored with school, that they could not hack it, or that they could not get along with the staff.

About one-third came from families who had been on welfare. About fifteen per cent came from families who had been on for more than two out of their last five years at home. While this was not a large minority, it was substantially larger than one would expect by chance. Among those whose fathers were in the labour force, more than one-half came from families where the father's occupation was in the lowest two of the seven occupational status categories used in the study.

Fifteen per cent of the short-term cases and thirty-one per cent of the longer-term cases had not held a full-time job in the past two years. Among the short-term cases, this usually resulted from having left school and not yet found work. Among the longer-term cases, this ordinarily represented chronic unemployment.

Those who had had jobs had held a wide variety of positions, with a wide variety of pay levels. They had liked and disliked quite different things about their work, and had left their jobs for quite different reasons. The reasons for which people had left their jobs emphasized the precarious nature of the work they had been able to get.

Three-tenths had been laid off. One-fifth had had a short-term job, or one that had been eliminated.

The Current Situation

About one-half said they were basically content with their situation. The other half expressed some dissatisfaction, usually around the fact that they did not have work. Although one-half felt they were basically content with their situation, eighty per cent said that welfare did not provide enough income to meet their needs. More than two-thirds said that they did not have enough money for food, clothing or shelter. This was interpreted to mean that they were not receiving high enough allowances. More than eighty per cent said that, apart from the difference in income, they would rather be working. Only two per cent said both that their incomes were adequate and that, apart from the money, it was better to be on welfare than to be working. As might be expected from the numbers who said their incomes were inadequate, the most common suggestion for changes in the welfare system was that more money should be provided.

A major source of satisfaction for the people we talked to was social contacts. More than one-third visited friends and had friends in to visit at least once a week. On the average, they would have had friends in about twice a week and gone out to visit friends about as often, and visited with members of their families about once a week.

About half of our respondents said that their parents did not know they were on welfare, were indifferent to the fact, or were pleased because they no longer had to support their child. We interpreted this to mean that many of our respondents would not be under any very great pressure from their parents to get work. The same appeared to be the case with friends. More than half said that their friends either did not know they were on welfare or were indifferent to the fact.

At the time we gathered the data, there was some discussion in the media over the possibility that a counter-culture was growing up, in which drug use, reliance on welfare, and rejection of traditional marriage were common. But as we have seen, few people indicated that they were satisfied with being on welfare. Two-thirds said they never smoked marijuana and four-fifths never used stronger drugs. (The proportion using marijuana is similar to that reported in studies of general population in the same age range conducted at that time in the near vicinity.) Less than one-half said that they agreed with common law marriages. Those who liked the idea of common law unions tended not to be the same people who smoked marijuana. We concluded that, while many people appeared to hold non-traditional views on these matters, it would be difficult to argue for the existence of a widespread counter-culture from these data.

Hopes for the Future

What people wanted in the future was quite varied. There were three major themes. One was employment. More than two-thirds said that one of the things they expected to do (inside of the next six months) was to get a job. More than two-thirds said that the most important thing in life or the one thing that would make them happier than they were, would be to get a job (or a specific job). One-half said they had a particular kind of work in mind. The other common responses had to do with material security and with positive human relations, ordinarily marriage.

Looking for Work

About one-quarter of the people we talked to in both the short-term and the longer-term samples said they had not been out looking for work in the two weeks before the first interview. About one-quarter said they had been out to look once or twice. About one-seventh had looked three or four times. More than one-third looked five times or more. There are few previous studies of job seeking effort so there is little

to compare these figures to. The rates seem roughly similar to those reported in the Vancouver study, Why Do Young People Go On Welfare?.^{*} The findings for the short-term cases seem roughly similar to those reported for workers under thirty who were registered with the State Unemployment Services in Erie, Pennsylvania in 1962.^{**} They also appear roughly consistent with data gathered from a national sample of Canadians who had been unemployed for five weeks or more during 1968.^{***}

So, while the data suggest that many people were not looking very actively for work, they were roughly comparable to data from the few other studies which have looked at job seeking effort. The data do raise the question, though, of why there should be a wide range of job seeking effort when such a clear majority of people say they would rather work than be on welfare.

Whatever their level of job seeking, most said that they would be willing to accept quite a variety of jobs if they were offered. Five out of six, for example, said they would take an assembly line job paying \$3.00 an hour. Three-fifths would take a job as a salesclerk at the minimum wage. On the average, people said they would be willing to work for an income not much different from what they had received in their last job.

Comparisons Among Groups

A point was made of comparing newcomers to the rolls and longer-term cases. There were relatively few differences.

The longer-term cases were more likely than the January cases to have grown up in Hamilton-Wentworth, to have low levels of schooling, and to say their chances of finding work were poor. They were more inclined than the short-term cases to want to see improvements in the administration of the welfare system. They were also more negative in

* Cox, J. et al. Why Do Young People Go On Welfare?, B.C. Institute of Technology: Vancouver, 1971, Appendix B.

** Shepherd, H.L. and Belitsky, A.H. The Job Search, John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1966, p. 138.

***Eighth Annual Review, Economic Council of Canada, Information Canada, p. 173.

their attitudes to drugs. On other questions, the groups were very much the same. Considering the range of questions asked and the number on which there were no significant differences, it would seem that the two samples should be thought of as essentially alike.

We were also interested in comparing the sexes. Here, too, there were few significant differences. Females were less likely to have grown up outside Hamilton-Wentworth. They were less likely to have left school because they found it a negative experience. Otherwise, the differences seemed to result from sex-typing of occupations. The sexes had had a different pattern of previous jobs, and were looking for a different pattern. They had had different average pay levels, and were willing to work for different amounts. In other respects, the sexes were very much alike.

CHAPTER 5 - LEVELS OF JOB SEEKING

Chapter 5 contains three sections. In the first, we review the association between individual questions and levels of job seeking. In the second, we report on our efforts to develop an index that would predict job seeking levels. In the third, we report the results of our efforts to locate patterns of answers that would define groups who were looking for work about equally often.

The measure of job seeking used was the number of times people had looked for work in the two weeks before the first interview.

Some readers may wonder about the accuracy of this sort of data. In surveys, people often try to give answers that will place themselves in a good light. Might not this have happened?

We cannot be absolutely certain that any given individual told the truth, but there are two reasons to believe that our data are basically sound. The first is that people who reported that they had been out looking for work five times or more in the past two weeks were twice

as likely to find jobs over the course of the study as those who reported lower levels of effort. We could find no significant intervening variables. The second reason is that so many reported that they had not looked at all. If people had been trying to put themselves in the best light, they would presumably have overstated their efforts. Over one-quarter of our respondents said that they had not looked for work at all. Another quarter said they had looked only once or twice. Since so many people reported such low levels of effort, and since those who reported higher levels were more likely to find work, it would seem that the data could not have been too seriously distorted by over-statement.

Associations with Job Seeking

Almost every question we asked was tested for an association with job seeking. A number of quite clear findings emerged. People whose parents had not been on welfare and whose parents had encouraged them to stay in school tended to look harder. Those who had had jobs in the last two years tended to look harder than those who had not. Those who were basically content with their lives and who had friends in relatively often did not look as often as those who were dissatisfied and had friends in less frequently. Those who used marijuana or were favourable to drug use did not look as hard as others. Those who said they liked to hear about new ideas or to work out new ways of doing things tended to look harder than those who did not. Those who said their aims for the future included getting a job or the right kind of job looked harder than others.

Indexes to Predict Job Seeking

Unfortunately, though, none of the questions associated with job seeking was a very good predictor. No individual item explained more than one-eighth of the variance among the January cases or one-twelfth among the longer-term cases. So we had to see whether some

combination of items would do what individual items would not. We were able to develop formulae that would explain forty-one per cent of the variation in job seeking among the short-term cases and twenty-four per cent among the longer-term cases.

In each case, a series of items were weighted so as to provide the best possible prediction. For the January cases, the items included were:

- where the respondent grew up (those who grew up outside Ontario looked harder than those who grew up in Ontario)
- presence or absence of pessimism about the future (the pessimists looked harder than others)
- whether the respondent had registered at employment agencies other than Manpower (those who had looked harder)
- time spent watching television (the more television, the less job seeking)
- whether the respondent smoked marijuana (those who did did not look as hard as those who did not)
- whether the respondent agreed or disagreed with the statement, "I find it hard to understand perfectionists." (those who disagreed looked harder)
- presence or absence of answers showing confidence in personal ability (those who expressed confidence looked harder than those who did not).

The weighting of these specific items and the manner in which they were coded are reported in Chapter 5, page 28. In general, we felt that the results for the January cases were less readily interpreted than those for the longer-term cases. With the longer-term cases, the items included were:

- whether the respondent had been convicted in Magistrate's Court in the past year (those who had did not look as hard as those who had not)
- sex of respondent (males looked harder than females)
- presence or absence of satisfaction with the current situation (those who were satisfied looked less often than those who were not)
- whether the respondent smoked marijuana (those who did looked less often than those who did not)
- presence or absence of desire for employment among responses to a set of open-ended questions at the end of the interview (those who gave this response looked harder than those who did not)
- agreement or disagreement with the statement, "I like to hear about new ideas" (those who agreed looked harder than those who did not)

The coding for the answers to these questions and the weighting in the prediction formulae are found in Chapter 5, page 29.

Among the few previous studies of job seeking, none, to our knowledge, have attempted this form of analysis. So, even if we have explained only one-fifth or two-fifths of the variance, we have made progress.

Patterns of Answers

If possible, we wanted to go farther. One approach was suggested by the fact that some of the associations between job seeking and other things seemed to result from special groups. Might there be definable groups, which were much alike in job seeking, and much alike in other respects?

There is no established method for identifying such groups. So we had to devise our own. The method is explained in Chapter 5, pages 31-37.

We were particularly interested in locating groups displaying quite high or quite low levels of job seeking. Among the short-term cases, we were able to find three groups with high levels and four with low levels. Among the longer-term cases, we defined five groups with high levels and four with low levels.

These groups, as might be inferred from the number that were identified, were all rather small. Among the short-term cases, the seven groups contained fifty-two cases. The categories defined would explain seventy-three per cent of the variance in job seeking. Among the longer-term cases, the nine groups included fifty-eight cases. They explained eighty-three per cent of the variation in levels of job seeking.

In a summary of the highlights of the report, we cannot review the characteristics of more than a few of these groups. But we should at least describe three groups with high levels of job seeking and three with low levels. First, let us look at some of the more active groups.

One of these could be defined with just two questions. They had all grown up outside of Ontario and they rarely or never drank alcohol. (Six of the seven never did.) Five of this group had been looking for work ten to fourteen times in the preceding two weeks. One had been looking five to nine times and the other had looked more than fifteen times.

In terms of their other answers, it would seem that the group could very well be described as in-migrant puritans. None of them had ever used marijuana or strong drugs. Six out of seven went to church (less than one-quarter of the January cases ever went to church). Six out of seven said that they tried to make sure that the things they did

were in good taste.

Now, one of the classic puritan virtues is hard work. Their answers to other questions suggest that they attached real importance to work. All seven said they were dissatisfied with their situation on welfare. Six out of seven said that the most important thing in their lives was to get a job. (The seventh might well have said the same, if she had not been planning her wedding.) All five of those who were interviewed on the second round said that they had had a hard time in life so far and they were trying to make their future better. All of them said that they believed in planning ahead for the future, and all of them said that they were interested in getting more education.

Altogether then, it is not difficult to see why this group was among those who looked for work most often.

Another group who were looking for work vigorously seemed to be distinguished by its conventionality. Of the seven cases, five had gone out looking for work ten to fourteen times in the two weeks before the first interview. The other two had gone out five to nine times. The conventionality of the group showed through in many ways. Not only did all of them want to be married, but six of seven gave "romantic involvement" as a major reason for wanting to marry. Not only were they dissatisfied with being on welfare, but their parents were disappointed about it as well. Everyone mentioned getting a job as a major hope for the future. Now wanting to marry and wanting to work are very basic traditional values in our society. To round out the picture, everyone in the group agreed with statements indicating their interest in doing things in good taste and in trying to do things conventionally. Probably many of the others would have referred to those in this group as "super straights". In line with their basically traditional values, these people were looking hard for work.

The last of the harder-looking groups that we will be looking at here was defined by a quite complex set of questions. But the

complexity sorts itself out quite well.

None of their families had ever been on welfare. Members of this group had been supporting themselves in blue collar jobs until quite recently. Clearly, the shift from working to welfare was very disagreeable. Nine out of ten were so unhappy with the situation that we coded their responses to our question about how satisfied they were with their lives or what would make them happier as "depressed". Not surprisingly, nine out of ten also said the most important thing in their lives was getting a job, or that the one thing that would make them happier would be a job. The group also showed signs of vitality. All said, without qualification, that they became enthusiastic about a lot of things and that they wanted to get further job training. All but one or two agreed, without qualification, that they liked to work out new ways of doing things, that they liked to hear about new ideas, and that they had lively imaginations.

Along with these signs of vitality were signs of a basic self-discipline. The defining characteristics of the group included an interest in being in good taste and an ability to make plans and follow them. All members of the group also used alcohol less than frequently.

Now a combination of dislike for welfare, vitality and a substantial amount of self-control would seem likely to produce someone who would be trying hard to get work. It did. Of the ten people in this category, eight had been out looking for work five to nine times in the preceding week. One had been out ten to fourteen times. The last had been out more than fifteen times.

We should also look at some examples of groups who had not been looking for work very hard.

One group, found among the short-term cases, appeared to be "hanging loose". All said they lived day by day and were content with their lives in general. None mentioned getting a job as a hope for the future. Most disagreed with the statement, "I make plans and follow them".

Most agreed with the statement, "I do not often feel like taking on new responsibilities." It would seem that these people had an orientation to life that would have to be modified if they were to become very active job seekers. None of the seven people in the group had looked for work in the two weeks before the first interview.

Another group found among the longer-term cases, consisted of unattached young women who were either pregnant or the mothers of pre-school children. It would seem that the reasons for which they were not looking for work did not reflect a lack of interest in employment. (Those who were pregnant or had children and who said that they were not interested in getting work were not included in the analysis of job seeking levels.) Rather, they felt that any job they took would have to allow them to see that their children were well cared for and provide enough money that they would be better off than they would be on welfare.

The final example will be a group found among the short-term cases. This group consisted of sixteen and seventeen year olds who had just dropped out of school. None had more than Grade 8 education. All came from families who had been on welfare. All said they sometimes worried about their ability to do the things people expected of them or asked of them. All said they lived day by day and were basically content with their lives. Our interviewers remarked that some of them had very little idea of how to go about looking for a job. Since this group seemed to have little in the way of marketable skills, it may be that, had they been looking, they would have found work only with difficulty.

It will be noted that the groups we have described were all rather different. The same is true of the groups we have not included here. This is one illustration of the basic diversity of the population. In spite of this diversity, we have been able to explain seventy-three per cent of the variance in job seeking levels among the short-term cases and eighty-three per cent among the longer-term cases. Since no previous studies, to our knowledge, have attempted to develop ways of

predicting job seeking, explaining this much of the variance means that we have made considerable headway.

CHAPTER 6 - FINDING WORK

Chapter 6 contains two sections. The first deals with the association between particular questions and job finding. The second describes our efforts to find an index that would predict success or failure in finding work.

Correlations with Job Finding

We tested almost every question we asked for an association with finding work. Relatively few were related. Of the ones that did show a definite association, most had to do with marketability. Those who were under eighteen were less likely to find work than those who were older. The probability of finding work rose with formal education. Those who had jobs in the last two years were more likely to find work than those who had not. Those whose most recent jobs were relatively high on our occupational status scale were more likely to find work than those whose most recent jobs were toward the bottom of the scale. Two other factors were also associated with finding work. Expecting to find work in the next six months was associated with success. High levels of job seeking effort meant higher chances of success.

Predicting Job Finding

As it happened, no single question explained more than sixteen per cent of the variance in finding work among the short-term cases or more than ten per cent among the longer-term cases. So we had to see whether a combination of questions would do what individual questions would not. For each sample, an equation was developed which would assign a score to each case. Those below a defined cut-off point would be predicted to find work. Those above it would be predicted not to

find it. The items in the equation for the short-term cases were as follows:

- the occupational status score of the respondents most recent job (the higher the status, the more likely a person was to find work)
- frequency of looking for work in the two weeks before the first interview (the higher, the more likely work would be found)
- whether the respondent was looking for a specific type of work (those who were were more likely than those who were not to find work)
- whether the respondent thought that welfare provided enough money to meet his needs (those who thought so were less likely to find work than those who did not think so)
- age (the older respondents were more likely to find a job than the younger ones).

The weighting of the items and how they were coded are described in Chapter 6, page 15.

The items in the equation for the longer-term cases were as follows:

- whether the respondent planned to leave the city (those who were thinking of it looked harder than those who were not)
- the number of firms contacted in the last three months (the more, the more likely work would be found)
- age (those under nineteen were less likely to get work than those nineteen and over)
- whether the respondent shared living expenses with anyone else (those who did were less likely to get work)
- whether the respondent was pregnant or had a preschool child (those who were in these situations were less likely to get work than those who were not).

The weighting of the items and the way they were coded are described in Chapter 6, page 16.

There are three things that are common to the equations for the two samples. Each contains a measure of job seeking. Each also contains age. Each contains as well items that appear to have something to do with motivation to find work. Among the January cases, these items were whether the respondent had a specific type of work in mind and whether he thought the income from welfare met his needs. Among the longer-term cases, the item was whether the respondent was thinking of leaving town. Many of those who spoke of leaving meant that if they could not find work here or got to the point where it looked as though they could not, they would go somewhere else. In this sense, thinking of leaving was a sign of interest in finding work.

Perhaps the fact that the equations are alike in including age, levels of job seeking and items which were interpreted as showing an interest in finding work means there are some rather general factors in job finding. Other items were specific to the two groups. This suggests the importance of being aware of the idiosyncratic features of particular groups in understanding whether their members find work.

Without knowing anything about the people involved, we could have gotten sixty-two per cent right among the short-term cases and sixty-six among the longer-term cases. These were the percentages who did not find work. If we predicted that everyone would fail, we would be right almost two-thirds of the time.

Using the cut-off points with the prediction equations, we find that among the January cases, eighty-seven per cent of our predictions are correct. Among the longer-term cases, eighty-three per cent are correct.

Among the short-term cases, we have made a two-thirds reduction in the number of errors we would have made without knowledge of the people in our sample. Among the longer-term cases, we have reduced the errors by about one-half.

We know of no other studies of job finding in which this kind of prediction has been made. So reducing the errors that would otherwise have been made by as much as we have represents a considerable step forward.

CHAPTER 7 - IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Chapter 7 contains five sections, four of which will be summarized here. These deal with the topics:

- 1) Why are single young people on welfare?
- 2) Are they making reasonable efforts to find work?
- 3) What needs to be done to get people into appropriate jobs faster?
- 4) A suggested approach.

Why Are Single Young People On Welfare?

Our conclusions on this question might be summed up in four points.

1. The numbers who come on welfare will be very heavily determined by the state of the labour market. As the Swadron Commission, which reviewed the employment situation of unattached welfare recipients in Ontario in 1971 remarked -

"It is hardly necessary to go beyond population and unemployment statistics to account for the increase in unattached employable recipients of employment assistance. It is scarcely necessary to speculate whether laziness or work avoidance is an important cause. It is not likely that in the last two years twenty thousand persons suddenly grew lazy and looked for welfare instead of work."*

2. The people who end up on welfare are likely to be those who have just left school, have just come out of jail, or who have been in

*Swadron, B.B., op.cit., p. 62

precarious jobs. The vast majority were in the latter group. Those who had this kind of job were likely to have relatively low education and were more likely than average to come from families low on the social status scale.

3. Personal characteristics determine to a significant degree which people will get off welfare most rapidly. As we have noted in Chapter 6, we were able to do about two-thirds better in predicting who would find work among the short-term cases than we could have done without knowledge of individual cases. On the longer-term cases, we were able to do about fifty per cent better.
4. The length of time people remain on welfare will depend on the state of the labour market. There are no data available with which we can be precise about the relationship between labour market conditions and how long young people stay on welfare.

Are People Making Reasonable Efforts to Find Work?

The General Welfare Assistance Act states that if a person is not considered to be employable, he will be eligible for assistance if he is making a reasonable effort to find work. There is no clear definition of what is meant by the expression "reasonable effort".

There does not seem to be any obvious way of setting a cut-off point above which the person is looking hard enough to meet the requirements of the Act and below which he is not. But it would seem difficult to argue that someone who does not look for work at least once in two weeks is meeting them, unless there are extenuating circumstances. As we noted in Chapter 4, one-quarter of the people we talked to had not been looking for work in the two weeks before the first interview.

There were some cases in which extenuating circumstances were clearly present. A few people were ill, or had to be out of town for part of the period. Some young women were pregnant or were single mothers. If we were to remove these cases from consideration, about

one-fifth of our samples would remain.

A number of reasons might be suggested for which they had not been seeking work. Perhaps they had tried very hard to find work and then become discouraged. Or perhaps they saw their chances of finding work as almost nil. But neither of these seems to be an explanation for what we found. As we pointed out in Chapter 5, while individual cases changed, there was no sign of a trend either up or down in job seeking between the first and second interviews. Nor is there any great difference between the short-term and the longer-term cases. While some people may have become discouraged over time, then, this was certainly not general. Then, too, as we noted in Chapter 5, there was no significant relationship between how likely people thought they were to get the kind of job they wanted and their level of job seeking.* So, while either of these factors may explain a number of cases, neither seems to have much general explanatory power.

Another possibility has been suggested by Elliott Liebow. In his study of Negro men who frequented a particular street corner in a large American city, Liebow explained why work was not of great importance to many of them in the following way:

"The rest of society holds the job of dishwasher or janitor or unskilled labourer in low esteem if not outright contempt. So does the street corner man. He cannot do otherwise. He cannot draw from a job those social values which other people do not put into it."**

"Delivering little and promising no more, the job is 'no big thing'."***

* Possibly, those who were discouraged were counter-balanced by those who looked harder because of the apparent difficulties.

** Liebow, Elliott, Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men, Little, Brown, 1967, pp.58-59.

***op. cit., p.63

This may explain what happens in some cases. But its explanatory power is very low for our data. There is no significant association between level of job seeking and education or between level of job seeking and the occupational status score for a person's most recent job. If a lack of attraction to low status jobs was the explanation for our results, we might expect those who had more education, or who had held higher status jobs, and whose marketability was greatest, to be looking more frequently. To strengthen the argument, it might be noted that among those who had had specific types of work in mind, there was no correlation between job seeking and the occupational status score of the job the person was thinking of.

Another possibility would be a variation on the "culture of poverty" theme. Perhaps people have grown up in families on welfare, have had little encouragement to do well in school, and have many acquaintances who are in the same position. In these circumstances, it would be understandable that they would not be looking for work very hard. As it happens, though, of the three factors mentioned, only coming from a family on welfare makes a difference in levels of job seeking. If we use it as a predictor of who looks for work and who does not, it explains only two per cent of the variance.

It would seem, then, that the more obvious explanations for why people had not looked for work do not work very well. As we have seen in Chapter 5, the fullest explanation for job seeking levels could be obtained by looking at patterns in the answers that people gave us. These patterns often seemed to reflect particular views of life.

What Needs To Be Done To Get People Into Appropriate Jobs Faster?

It might be inferred from the data in Chapter 6 that there are three rather general identifiable factors involved in finding work: marketability, desire for work, and level of job seeking.

1. Marketability

A person's qualifications cannot be changed directly by the public assistance system. But there is an elaborate system of upgrading and skill training financed by the senior levels of government. Unfortunately, almost half of the people we talked to had completed less than Grade 10 and, hence, would require more basic education before entering most skill training programs. If they can gain entry to upgrading programs, their chances can be improved in this way.

If a person cannot meet the competition for entry to these programs, perhaps the market can be changed. Welfare department workers or others can try to persuade employers to hire people on welfare. Sometimes sheltered work environments can be provided. A certain amount of this kind of thing has been involved in welfare programs but in most places, including Hamilton, it has not been a matter of systematic ongoing effort.

2. Desire For Work

We have noted that changing people's interest in work is not likely to be easy. People's attitudes to something as central to our culture are likely to have been built up over a period of time and, hence, be difficult to change.

3. Job Seeking

We have reviewed our findings on the individual items associated with job seeking in our summary of Chapter 5. The trouble is that these individual things, even if they are amenable to influence, are not very good predictors of how hard people will look for work. As we have shown in Chapter 5, no individual question will explain more than one-eighth of the variance in looking for work among the short-term cases or one-twelfth among the longer-term cases. As we have also seen in Chapter 5, to get a

fuller understanding of what was happening, we had to look at patterns of answers. Perhaps looking at these will give us some further idea of what might be done.

At one end of the scale, the end at which most people were looking actively for work, probably the only thing that needs to be done is to make sure that people are aware of possible openings. They will look after the rest. It would seem from the characteristics of the groups who were not looking very hard that much more could be involved. Four such groups were defined in each sample. We have already seen what three of these groups were like. Let us look briefly at the other five.

Two of these were found among the short-term cases. One group consisted of people who said they were content with life in the present, drank alcohol more than occasionally, and had very active social lives. They seemed to be having a good time in life even though they were on welfare. The other group consisted of young women who showed a strong orientation to marriage and little orientation to work.

Among the longer-term cases, there were three groups. The first was all female. This group showed signs of low levels of vitality. None described herself as enthusiastic. All said they felt depressed. All had left school because of boredom or inability to hack it. They did not seem to be receiving any impetus from other people to find work.

The second group was all male. Like the preceding group, it showed signs of a lack of vitality. All said they felt depressed. All said they found it hard to think of things they felt like doing. Most said they did not become enthusiastic about a lot of things. At the same time, there were signs of low self-discipline. Most said they used marijuana and they used strong drugs more often than rarely. All said the statement, "I make plans and follow them" was false.

The final group was very much like one of the groups among the short-term cases. Members of this group all said they were content with life, lived day by day, and drank alcohol more often than occasionally. Like the comparable group among the short-term cases, they were very interested in social life and seemed to be enjoying life even though they were on welfare.

To influence many of these groups to become active job seekers would seem a difficult task. In most cases, it appears that their views of life were not the kind that would seem likely to lead to vigorous job seeking.

A more serious difficulty, from a policy viewpoint, is the sheer diversity of the groups. The needs of the groups appear to be quite different.

The diversity of these groups reflects the general diversity of the population. It was pointed out in Chapter 3 that very few people gave answers that matched more than eighteen times out of twenty-three with the answers given by other people on the questions used to develop our illustrative cases. In Chapter 4, we noted that there were relatively few things that were true of more than two-thirds of the people we talked to. In Chapter 5, we noted that while we could find groups whose levels of job seeking were about the same, and who were alike in other ways, these groups were all small.

The sheer diversity of the sample makes it difficult to provide a simple answer to the question of how to get people into productive employment more quickly. Educational levels range from Grade 4 to university graduation. The number of times people had gone out looking for work in the last two weeks ranged from none to fifteen to twenty times. Interest in finding work varied from "I don't dig it" to "Finding a job is the most important thing in my life."

Whatever is done by the welfare system must take into account the wide range of differences in this type of population. The needs of very different people must be assessed, and appropriate programs must be available to handle the wide range of cases that present themselves. There can be no easy general solutions; what must be done is to carefully review the kinds of situations that are likely to come up and to ensure that appropriate responses can and will be given. It is a complex task, but if the best service is to be given to this kind of population, the task must be carried out.

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